



The
Jewish

Congregation Sha'ar Zahav
San Francisco

Gaily Forward

Nisan - Sivan 5776 / April - June 2016

Recognizing Our Shared Humanity

By RABBI TED RITER

I grew up in El Paso, Texas, which sits on the border with Mexico's Ciudad Juarez. As a teen, Juarez was a common destination for shopping, dining, and always a favorite for out of town guests. Some of my classmates even lived in Juarez, navigating the bridge each morning and afternoon for school. Those days of easy travel across the bridge are long gone, but the feeling of living in these twin cities has never left me. We were one community with a shared bi-national consciousness. A stream of water and a small fence divided us, but common interests and shared concerns connected us. Perhaps the strongest driving force was that we recognized the humanness in each other.

Recognizing the "other" as human is a constant theme in our Jewish texts. Repeatedly we are reminded to care for the "stranger in our midst." Why do we need this repetition in our Torah, daily prayers and upcoming Passover celebration? I believe it is because it is not our natural inclination to welcome someone who does not look like us, speak like us or see the world like we do. Instead, we call them "other," "stranger," or "immigrant." We make labels as a way to distinguish who is rightfully in and who should be kept out.

This year's race for President is ripe with the language of "other." We are seeing campaigns focused on building literal walls and figurative walls. Who is in and who is out? This rhetoric is jarring to my ears, and I believe it should be loudly denounced.

We are taught by our history of slavery and persecution and our sacred texts to embrace rather than repel.

Our Haggadah reads:

Let all who are hungry come and eat.

Let all who are in need come and share the Passover meal.

This year we are still slaves — Next year may we all be truly free.

Our Passover story teaches us that we are on a common journey in which we are to share our meals and share our freedom, even as we might be struggling together through our own slavery. Sharing in our lives this way might not be our natural inclination, but repeatedly we are taught that it is through this act that we are going to experience the "Promised Land." (continued on page 2)

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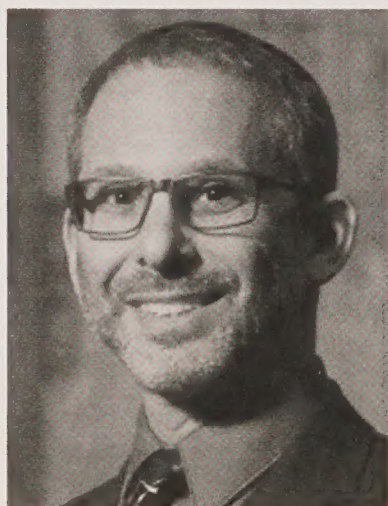
(from the cover) Changing the national dialogue is not easy on our own. Our voices around a seder table this year, however, can shift the conversation for our family and friends. As we make our guest lists for Passover, I'm encouraging us all to think about who is around our seder table. Who is friend and family, and who is one we might normally label as "other"? Is there space for them at our table? Is there space for them in our lives? Can we, through our Passover observance, open our homes and arms to embrace someone we might naturally be inclined to block out?

One of my favorite readings from Mishkan T'filah is based upon a discussion in the Talmud about the time to begin our morning prayers:

One sage taught: Night ends and morning begins when you can distinguish between a blue and white thread. Another replied: from the time you can distinguish a friend from a distance of four cubits. Perhaps: the new day begins when you can recognize the face of your brother or sister.

Growing up in El Paso I learned to recognize my brother and sister as they crossed the bridge, and I truly believe when we are able to do the same at our Passover table and on the national stage, we will finally reach the Promised Land.

Get to Know Rabbi Riter



Want a chance to talk with Rabbi Ted Riter in an informal setting, get to know him better, and share your own thoughts and stories with him? CSZ's Keshet Task Force has set up several informal gatherings in April and May with Rabbi Riter, each hosted by a CSZ member, to do just that. These small-group gatherings offer an opportunity to talk with Rabbi Riter and hear his ideas for strengthening our community – and for him to get to know us better, too. By sharing our stories with one another in a more intimate setting, we'll also strengthen our connections with other CSZ members. Check your weekly email for times and locations of these gatherings! For more information send an e-mail to connections@shaarzahav.org.

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Moving on Up!

by Laura Lowe



We have been busy on so many fronts. The best part is that on, all of our fronts, we are moving in a positive direction. Here are some highlights:

We're back at Herbst! This is the first year we have had the opportunity to return to Herbst for the High Holy Days

since it was closed for renovations. What does this mean for you? A few things. First, Herbst is more expensive than the Scottish Rite Masonic Center. A number of members have made extra pledges to help with the expenses, and we will need everyone's assistance to make our decision to go back to Herbst a success. Second, the venue is larger. We want your help filling those seats with your friends and family! We are really looking forward to going back to Herbst. We are also considering a new machzor (prayerbook) for High Holy Days. Over the last couple of years, we have been testing the Union of Reform Judaism's (URJ) draft of their machzor. It is now available in hardback for purchase, so the URJ's machzor is one option available to us. Another option is to publish our own Sha'ar Zahav version of a High Holy Days machzor. Finally, we could keep using our current machzor

and supplement. The Ritual Committee and Va'ad are looking at all of these options. We'll let you know our decision soon.

You may recall that last year at our Annual Meeting, Irene Ogus gave a moving report on the state of our building. After that meeting the Building and Grounds Committee was invigorated beyond any of my expectations. We are meeting regularly and coming up with plans to make our building prettier and more functional. One of the puzzling issues centers around our pews. When we move the pews, the sanctuary floors are damaged. We're working to come up with recommendations for the Va'ad as we continue.

Beit Sefer Phyllis Mintzer is another area where we are moving forward. The Va'ad has expressed its commitment to continuing to invigorate BSPM, and a group of us are meeting now to figure out how the school will look in the future. I'm excited about our dreams for Beit Sefer.

Looking at the future is sometimes scary. When it comes to Sha'ar Zahav, our future looks amazing. We are moving on up! With your help we have achieved so much over the last year. We will continue to shine with you. Share your thoughts or dreams about Sha'ar Zahav with me or with someone in leadership. I can be reached at lhowesf@gmail.com.

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You Can Sing

By SHARON BERNSTEIN

As a cantor, some of my most poignant and meaningful interactions are with people who say "I can't sing." The reality is quite different -- we are all blessed with bodies that are musical instruments: vocal cords, acoustically resonating bone structures, an ability to create and feel vibrations and rhythms.

Not only that, but singing has been scientifically proven to be good for us. For me, one of the yummiest things in the universe is experiencing all of our spirits and voices together in community.

So the following is for me, for you, and for all of us.



You Can Sing

1. You can sing.

Yes, you.

Even if someone or someones once told you not to sing,
You can sing.

Even if pitch is a completely foreign concept,
You can sing.

Even if your vocal cords or lungs don't work,
You can sing in your body, in your soul, in your mind.
You can sing.

2. You don't have to sing.

Silence is good, too.

3. Singing can feel good.

Those vibrations in us
And in those around us
Resonating and reverberating and shimmying.

4. Many of the psalms

Especially in Kabbalat Shabbat

Talk about singing.

Singing people

Singing plants

Singing animals

As if all creation were one big musical.

The next time you pass a tree,

See if you can hear it singing.

(In the psalms, they dance too...)

5. You can sing.

By MARC LIPSCHUTZ

During the January 20, 2016

Va'ad meeting we:

- Agreed to return to the Herbst Theater for Rosh Hashanah and Yom Kippur 5777 to ensure accessibility for our members and guests.
- Enthusiastically endorsed our Beit Sefer Phyllis Mintzer religious school, and agreed to reinvigorate and strengthen it.

All CSZ members are invited to attend Va'ad meetings, which are customarily scheduled on the third Wednesday of each month at 7PM.

During the February 17, 2016

Va'ad meeting we:

- Agreed to initiate a scent-free CSZ to create greater accessibility for our members and guests. To promote additional accessibility, we further agreed to disallow dogs from our shul (with the exception of service animals).
- Reviewed our identity work with Lightbox and strategized our next phase of related work to include promoting our brand to the larger Bay Area Jewish community.

By TERRY FLETCHER

Since Fall 2007 I have served as Congregation Sha'ar Zahav's representative to the San Francisco Jewish Community Relations Council (JCRC). At Rabbi Riter's suggestion I will be submitting quarterly reports to the JGF on what the Council is up to and what I have been doing.

The Jewish Community Relations Council speaks on behalf of the organized Jewish community of the Bay Area. The Council is made up of representatives of synagogues, other Jewish organizations and appointed at-large members. These members gather at a quarterly assembly meetings at which we debate and vote on consensus statements.

At the JCRC's January 19 meeting, we debated and passed a consensus statement on economic justice. This statement will inform the Council's work and positions on economic justice issues for the coming years. It includes positions on the role of government in promoting economic justice, wealth and income inequality, jobs and fair wages, education, tax reform, food security, homelessness, quality affordable housing, healthcare, public benefit programs and the

digital divide. The full text of the statement can be found at https://jcrc.org/uploads/Economic_Justice_final_statement_011916_MB.pdf.

The JCRC's next big project will be to develop a statement on racial justice. The first step in the process will be hold a series of "Town Hall" meetings to gather input from members of the community.

All members of JCRC member organizations including Sha'ar Zahav are invited to attend these town halls. The San Francisco town hall will already have happened by the time this issue of the JGF comes out. (Hopefully you saw that event announced in the weekly email and some of you were able to attend.) An East Bay Town Hall meeting on "Race and the Law" will take place on April 7 from 6:30 to 8:30 at the Impact Hub, 2323 Broadway, Oakland. An RSVP is required; to sign up go to: <https://app.etapestry.com/onlineforms/JCRCSanFrancisco/TH.html>

If you have any questions or comments about the JCRC, feel free to contact me at gillianf19@gmail.com.

Beit Sefer Phyllis Mintzer

By MARTIN RAWLINGS-FEIN

Shalom from your new
Interim Education Director!

This month we begin our concluding unit, "People of the Book," with a new vision of what Jewish education could be for our students, parents and community. It is my belief that students should be able to move as they learn prayer, not by rote, but by feeling; thus creating sacred moments when the Divine comes alive. This movement is also a tool for Jewish exploration as students engage in project-based learning (PBL).

For those not familiar with PBL for the Jewish classroom, this style of learning not only teaches information, but also engages students in questions about Jewish life, identity, values and connection. It is this new direction for our school that I feel most excited about.

In this unit we will engage students in Torah and Midrash with many different learning modalities while using multisensory resources (auditory, visual, tactile, kinesthetic) to bring learning alive. This was something that I worked on in my own classroom before becoming the Interim Education Director, and it is something that all of the teachers are currently working on in their lesson plans.

Some of the activities may include creating graphic novels, adding to our congregation's Children's Torah, and composing midrash of their own. Since project-based learning continuously incorporates the students' input of how best to show what they learn, these ideas may evolve over time. Stay tuned for our end of the year Celebration of Learning on May 14th to find out how it all comes together, or contact me to find out how you can volunteer in our classrooms to help make it happen.



This month we welcome not only Ila Cherney back as our Shinui educator, but also Nancy Brunn as our new Kehilla educator. Ila has been teaching for BSPM since the early 1990s and has worked with Phyllis Mintzer (z'l) and several Sha'ar Zahav education directors over the years. Nancy earned her teaching certificate

from Hebrew Union College and she comes to BSPM after a year of student teaching fifth graders at Brandeis-Hillel. I had the pleasure to see both of them in action at our last Celebration of Learning and was amazed by how they had created projects that really engaged and incorporated their students' input.

In addition to project-based learning, we are going to provide parents with ideas and suggestions to supplement their children's learning at home. Supplemental school is an opportunity to more fully involve our parents as partners in our BSPM teaching community. Part of that partnership is creating home rituals for you and your children to do together that also create family time. As we start this process, we would like to know:

- What do you, as parents or other congregants, find exciting about BSPM?
- What do you think works well for BSPM families?
- How can we help you engage in more home Jewish or interfaith rituals and experiences?

Please send an e-mail to education@shaarzahav.org to share your responses or to make an appointment with me. I can usually be found at CSZ on Tuesday, Wednesday, or Thursday afternoons, as well as Saturday mornings.

Fragrance-Free & Pet-Free: A Friendly Reminder

by JULIE DORF, JENNI OLSEN, and ANDREW RAMER

Increasing numbers of adults and children are being diagnosed with environmental illnesses, including chemical sensitivity and animal allergies. The symptoms of these disorders may include chronic pain, headaches, shortness of breath, dizziness, and digestive and skin reactions. Symptoms range from mild to severe, from slow-acting to almost immediate.

For those of us with allergies, walking into our building when a dog was or is present can trigger a swift response: impaired breathing and the risk of acute respiratory distress (unfortunately this is true even of so-called "hypo-allergenic" pets which often are just as allergenic as any other). Entering the sanctuary if someone is wearing a scented product - aftershave, perfume, scented shampoo - can do the same for those of us who are chemically sensitive. Even if you don't react to these products, some of them are hormone disrupters, others are carcinogenic, and we believe that all of them are toxic to the people who make them — in fact, to everyone.

There's a verse in the Torah that's relevant to why Sha'ar Zahav adopted a Fragrance-Free Policy & Pet-Free policy for our building last year: "You shall not curse a deaf person, or place a stumbling block before the blind." We took this step to make our community accessible and environmentally safe for everyone.

If you're old enough you'll remember the days when people smoked cigarettes in movies, restaurants and on airplanes before we knew about the dangers of second-hand smoke. This cultural shift did not happen overnight, but creating pet-free and fragrance-free spaces is like that — something to learn about and move toward, a step at a time. Around the world other congregations, hospitals, offices, and schools are adopting similar policies.

If you have pets that aren't certified service animals, please leave them at home. As an

experiment, look at your shampoo, conditioner, deodorant and detergent to see if they contain artificial fragrances. Then, as you use them up, consider replacing them with unscented ones, which are easy to find and eco-kosher — environmentally safe, organic, and non-toxic.



If this issue is unfamiliar to you, or puzzling, there are numerous websites you can visit.

Here are two we found useful.
from the Mayo Clinic:

<http://www.mayoclinic.org/diseases-conditions/pet-allergy/basics/definition/con-20028932>

from the Massachusetts Nurses Association:

www.massnurses.org/health-and-safety/articles/chemical-exposures/p/openItem/1346

Please know that by leaving your pets at home, by coming to CSZ fragrance-free, and by talking about this with other Sha'ar Zahav members and your family and friends, you are helping to create a healthier community and a healthier world for all of us.

A Joyful Spirit

By SYLVIE OLSON-DORF



Sylvie Olson-Dorf will be called to the Torah as a bat mitzvah on Saturday, May 7, surrounded by friends, family, classmates and the Sha'ar Zahav community.

Her parsha is Achrei Mot, which she has been learning to chant with her

bat mitzvah mentor Richard Weiner. She will co-lead the service with Rabbi Camille Shira Angel and Justyn Lezin.

Sylvie and her moms, Jenni Olson and Julie Dorf, and her sister Hazel, are delighted to be approaching this milestone and warmly invite

the congregation to help bring joy and ruach (spirit) to this special occasion.

Sylvie is in seventh grade at the Brandeis School of San Francisco and is also a proud member of the Junior Grrrl Brigade at Dance Mission where she has been taking classes and performing since 2012. Sylvie's many personal passions include dance and musical theater (ask her anything about Fun Home, Hamilton or School of Rock), Dr. Who, Hayao Miyazaki movies and baking.

Sylvie and her family are extremely grateful to all her mentors and supporters including Richard Weiner, Lisa Katz, Rabbi Camille Shira Angel, Wendy Brummer, Rebecca Weiner, Ora Prochovnick, Rabbi Ted Riter, Cantor Sharon Bernstein, and our b'nei mitzvah chavurah.

The Process

By SERAFINA PERSIKO BENJAMIN

Serafina Gabrielle Persiko Benjamin will become a bat mitzvah on May 28, 2016. Serafina's Torah portion is Leviticus Chapter 25, which is about the jubilee year and includes rules about slavery, ownership and kinship. This inspired her mitzvah project to raise money for the organization Not For Sale, which helps rescue victims of human trafficking. Not For Sale offers shelter, food, job options and education for the survivors.

Serafina has grown up at Sha'ar Zahav, starting with Friday night services in a sling cuddled up to one of her dads. She is a 7th grader at Children's Day School. She en-



joys shopping, having fun with her friends, drawing, singing, traveling, acting and much, much more.

Over the 12 (almost 13!) years she has lived, she has learned a lot from everyone who has helped her and hopes to receive encouragement and assistance in the future. She would like to thank Kendra Froshman, her mentor; Tiela Chalmers, her drash mentor; Rebecca Weiner, her friend and teacher; her parents, Geoff Benjamin and Craig Persiko; and

everyone else who has helped her persevere through the process of becoming a bat mitzvah.

A Diligent Student

By GABRIEL OLIVER-POLSKY



Gabriel Oliver-Polsky is the son of Steve Polsky & Mark Oliver and will celebrate his Bar Mitzvah on June 11, 2016.

His family moved from San Francisco to El Cerrito last summer, and he is a 7th grade student at Fred T. Korematsu Middle School.

Gabriel has been a student at Beit Sefer Phyllis Mintzer since he was five years old, and has been studying diligently for his Bar Mitzvah under the mentorship of CSZ congregant Marc Lipschutz.

At his new school, Gabriel has become a Safe School Ambassador to help combat bullying and to advocate for those students who have been treated poorly. He has always been active in sports. He continues his love of baseball by playing with El Cerrito Youth Baseball and plays basketball with Korematsu's after school program. Gabriel is very excited to celebrate with his friends, family, and the CSZ community.

The Next Generation

By HOWARD STEIERMANN

At most of CSZ's b'nei mitzvah services, the highlight for me occurs toward the end of the Amidah. The bar or bat mitzvah leads the congregation responsively in chanting "L'dor v'dor." That moment stirs me because the young adult is literally chanting "from generation to generation."

This spring at my nephew's bar mitzvah a different part of the Amidah brought tears to my eyes. At his synagogue, the Amidah liturgy includes the priestly benediction. My nephew read one of the oldest and, to me, most powerful of texts. I can still recall the little bundle in a swaddling blanket from 13 years ago. Now here he was, his voice cracking yet strong, enveloping me (and the congregation) in ancient words of blessing quoted from Torah text. It was at that moment that I felt secure, knowing that this next generation was taking on the mantle of Jewish learning and, more importantly, Jewish action.

The holiday of Shavuot celebrates God giving the Torah to us at Mount Sinai. It is said that all Jews, present, past and future were standing at Sinai



during that momentous occasion. Many of my family were murdered during the Holocaust, including my Uncle Hans who was gassed at Auschwitz. I was named after him. My parents were determined that he be remembered and that his

life be celebrated. As I heard my nephew leading his bar mitzvah service, I thought how the soul of this third Jewish generation is joining spiritually with me and our other relatives.

I have come to realize the holiday of Shavuot celebrates not only the giving of Torah, but also the transmitting of Torah. We are all links in the chain. L'dor v'dor, from generation to generation.

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by Rose-Ann Donner Colt

in memory of her father, Isaac Donner

Your donations help us realize our commitment to building and maintaining a vibrant, living practice for Congregation Sha'ar Zahav. A donation can be a meaningful way to honor friends or family, engagements, anniversaries, graduations, for special thanks, or to memorialize a loved one. Collectively, with your financial support, we continue to prosper, grow, and celebrate our future.

Mark Your Place In History - At Our Table

By ANDREW RAMER & KAREN SCHILLER

12th Annual Pride Seder
Friday, June 24, 5:30 – 7:15 pm

Why is this Pride Seder different from all other Pride Seders?

Every year on Sha'ar Zahav's LGBTQ Pride Shabbat, we come together to tell the story of our liberation from oppression, to celebrate our freedom, and to re-commit to our activism, remembering that none of us are free until all of us are free. We read from our Pride Haggadah, drink several glasses of a ritual beverage, and point to a seder plate containing items that represent our history.

This year will be the same - and very different. We'll still read from the Pride Haggadah we

created for our first Pride Seder in 2005, but we've reduced the text to its bare bones.

Instead of reading stories and poems written by Sha'ar Zahav members in the past, this year you will have a chance to tell part of your own story as you mark your place in our history and community.

Please bring a vegetarian dish to feed eight people. Sha'ar Zahav will supply drinks. A \$5 donation for members or \$10 for non-members is requested to cover materials.

Please RSVP by June 17 by calling or emailing the office at (415) 861-6932 or by email at office@shaarzahav.org.

SHA'AR ZAHAV COMMUNITY EVENTS

Sunset Hike & Havdalah

by KAREN SCHILLER

You are invited to join Sha'ar Zahav's Hiking Chavurah for a special sunset hike and Havdalah on Saturday, May 14.

We will start with a two-hour hike around Land's End and then build a fire on Ocean Beach, watch the sunset, enjoy a bring-your-

own picnic and end with Havdalah (there might also be some singing!).

All Sha'ar Zahav members are welcome to join the chavurah for the hike, the beach party or both. For more information, please email kschillercsz@gmail.com.

SHA'AR ZAHAV NOTES ON OUR NEW LOOK

You may have noticed we've given the JGF a visual update. In this issue, as part of an ongoing redesign process, we introduce our new graphic designer, Steve Davis.

We welcome your comments and feedback about our new design. You can email us at

jgf@shaarzahav.org. As a reminder, please send any submissions for our next issue to our editorial team **no later than May 15th**.

We would also like to take this opportunity to thank our outgoing designer, Jonathan Wieder, for all his hard work and dedication to the JGF.

Sha'ar Zahav Members Who Have Died in Recent Months:

Jerry Rosenstein on January 1, 2016

Our Condolences to:

Larry Best on the death of his ex-father-in-law,
and to Jazmine and Adam Best-Leung on the death of their grandfather, Hang-Wun Leung
Melissa Breckinridge on the death of her father, Arthur Judelsohn
Patty Caplan on the death of her father, David Caplan
Deborah Cohler on the death of her father, Ray Voss
Brian Ellis on the death of his father, Sidney Ellis
Alan Ferrara on the death of his aunt, Carmela Ferrara
Deborah Kinney on the death of her mother, Marilyn Kinney
Rachel Nancollas on the death of her grandfather, George Nancollas
Steve Polsky on the death of his mother, Elaine Polsky
Ellen Press on the death of her father, Marvin Press

Mazel Tov to:

Jane Aceituno & Larisa Migachyov
in honor of the birth & baby naming of
their daughter Clara Carmel Miriam.

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David Gellman
DGellman@g3mh.com

Arthur Meirson
AMeirson@g3mh.com

April

- 1 Adam Harris
- 2 Ronald Gertz
- 3 Abraham Cohen
- 6 Dennis Mitchell
- 21 Robert Sterman
- 23 Michael Randall
- 24 Norma Faini-Pick

May


- 9 Richard Inlander
- 9 Jack Jacobs
- 13 Jerome Davis
- 13 David Delroy
- 14 Thomas Yazman
- 17 Nanci Stern
- 19 Allan Altman
- 20 Robert Coffman
- 21 James Perkins
- 24 David Loebel

June

- 2 Jay Feinstein
- 2 Mark B. Feldman
- 8 Robert N Mackey
- 8 Judy Macks
- 9 Duff Kreitzberg
- 14 John Atteridg
- 14 Mirtha Beal
- 15 Barry Siegel
- 16 Michael Randall
- 16 Richard Rath
- 17 Joe Zygielbaum
- 20 William E. Valentine
- 24 David Shaber

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Please note: Advertising
deadline for our next
issue is May 15th!

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CSZ "Home Made" Passover Seder

Saturday April 23rd, 5:30PM

at Congregation Sha'ar Zahav
290 Dolores Street

Come celebrate Pesach with the CSZ community
at our **Congregational Second Night Seder!**
Led by Cantor Sharon Bernstein and Alan Gordon.

Our CSZ Congregational Seder is a "homemade" seder: we supply the seder plates, gefilte fish, wine, juice and kosher chicken and you bring the vegetable, fruit, fish and salad side dishes, all kosher for Passover. There is always plenty of good food and good company - and lots of ruach!

Bring your family and friends! Advance registration is required, and space is limited. Watch your email for registration information.